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ABSTRACT

The teaching of reading in English as a second language is discussed, and an instructional model is proposed. The functions that reading can serve, the processes involved in reading, and the kinds of materials available for instruction in reading in a second language are examined in these contexts: style and content, problems of interpretation, and the tension between objective and personal meaning. The language of reading texts, both authentic and simplified or contrived, as well as reading exercises, are also considered. The proposed model for classroom instruction integrates different text types, language types, and reading skills and exercises. (MSE)

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READING IN A SECOND LANGUAGE:

A GLOBAL SKILL OR A SET OF SKILLS?

by J. Brian Harrison

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Paper presented at a meeting of the International Association of Teachers of English as a Foreign Language in Brighton, England, April 1986.

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READING IN A SECOND LANGUAGE :

A GLOBAL SKILL OR A SET OF SKILLS?

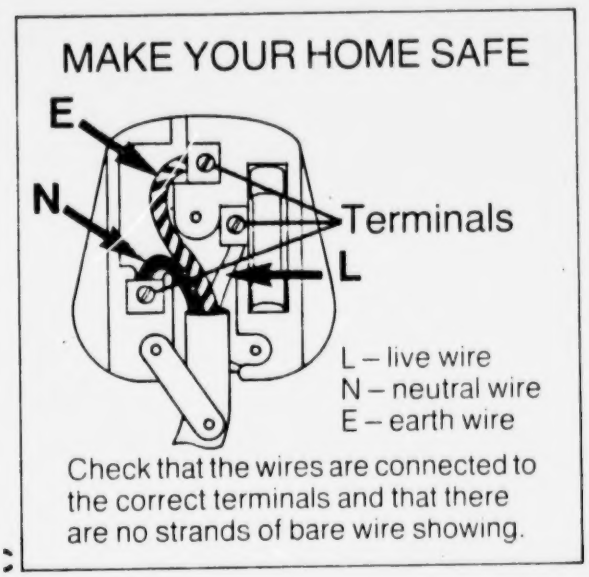
If one surveys the number of books that have been written on reading as opposed to writing, then the former outweighs the latter by a factor of about ten to one, at least in the library I use. Furthermore, there are in Britain now many academic posts in the teaching of reading and very few that I know of which are concerned with writing. It is difficult to understand why there should be this disparity, since the two processes are presumably of approximately equal intrinsic interest, but it may be that there is something about reading which leads to loose speculation and low level metaphysics. Reading occurs inside the head, writing manifests itself on the page, and so the evidence that someone can or cannot write is easy to come by; but evidence that someone is reading with understanding, insight, cultural competence and so on, during the moments that the reading is taking place, is less easy to uncover and less tractable. It is of course easy for the author of a reading course to construct a set of exercises which, if satisfactorily completed, will prove that pupils have, after the event, read the materials which he selected in ways which he ordained. This is what happens, presumably legitimately, at the beginning of and during reading courses; but someone who is learning to read in this way, via post-hoc exercises, is a different case from the mature native reader, some of whose reading may initially be random, but who will exercise choice and for the most part read things in which he has or is developing an interest. This kind of reader will not usually do anything subsequent to the reading which relates back to it. As Catherine Wallace[1] points out:-

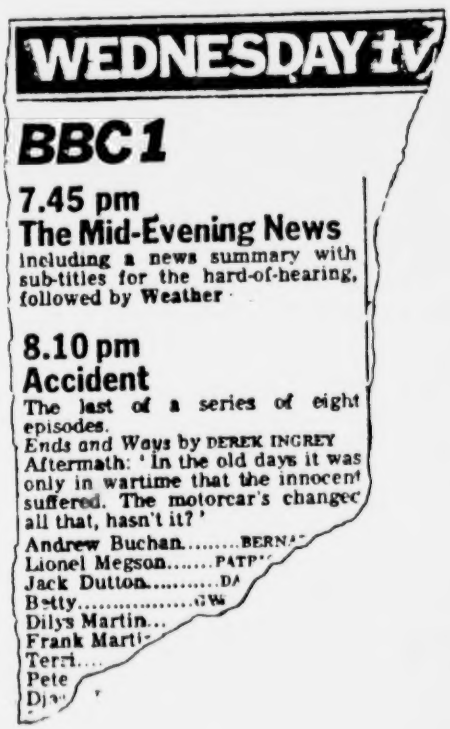
81-87-022

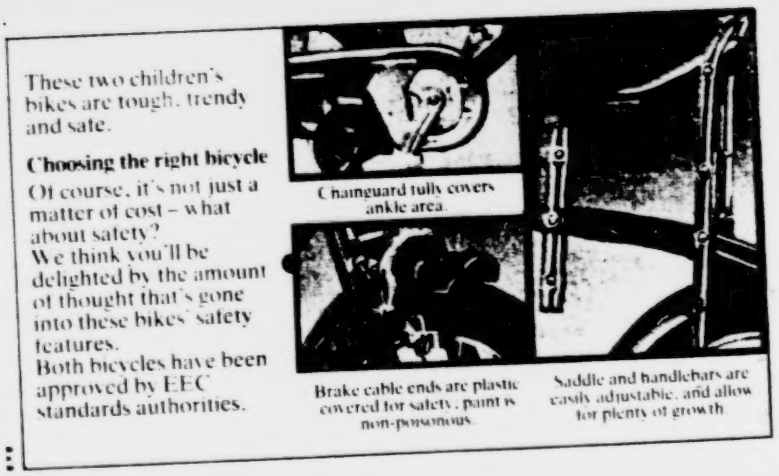
We do not come cold to a text and then proceed, retrospectively, to ask ourselves certain questions about it. Reading occurs in a context.

Mostly, the results of reading stay inside the mind. Academic reading, where one might wish to take notes or engage in other study skills activities (whose classroom analogue can be found in special purpose courses) is an exception which should not obscure the general point. How one moves from being the first kind of reader, someone who reads because he is told to, to the second, someone who reads because it has become a natural activity, something pleasurable, is problematic, especially in a second language. It is nonetheless true with first as well as with second language speakers that many people do not learn to read in the latter sense merely through reading in a casual and unstructured fashion.

'Reading skills[2]' reading and 'mature[3]' reading can now be exemplified in texts:-


MAKE YOUR HOME SAFE
E
N
Terminals
L
L – live wire
N – neutral wire
E – earth wire
Check that the wires are connected to the correct terminals and that there are no strands of bare wire showing.


WEDNESDAY tv
BBC 1
7.45 pm
The Mid-Evening News
including a news summary with sub-titles for the hard-of-hearing, followed by Weather
8.10 pm
Accident
The last of a series of eight episodes.
Ends and Ways by DEREK INGREY
Aftermath: 'In the old days it was only in wartime that the innocent suffered. The motorcar's changed all that, hasn't it?'
Andrew Buchan
Lionel Megson
Jack Dutton
Betty
Dilys Martin
Frank Marti
Terri
Pete



These two children's bikes are tough, trendy and safe.

Choosing the right bicycle

Of course, it's not just a matter of cost – what about safety?
We think you'll be delighted by the amount of thought that's gone into these bikes' safety features.
Both bicycles have been approved by EEC standards authorities.

Chainguard fully covers ankle area.

Brake cable ends are plastic covered for safety; paint is non-poisonous.

Saddle and handlebars are easily adjustable, and allow for plenty of growth.

T	F	Are these statements TRUE or FALSE?
✓		The BBC series 'Accident' had eight episodes.
		The wires in a domestic plug can be connected to any terminal
		Bicycles can be made suitable for growing children

'Alice thought she had never seen such a curious croquet ground in her life: it was all ridges and furrows: the croquet balls were live hedgehogs, and the soldiers had to double themselves up and stand on their feet, to make the arches.

The chief difficulty Alice found at first was in managing her flamingo: she succeeded in getting its body tucked away, comfortably enough, under her arm, with its legs hanging down, but generally, just as she had got its neck nicely straightened out, and was going to give the hedgehog a blow with its head, it would twist itself round and look up in her face, with such a puzzled expression that she could not help bursting out laughing; and, when she had got its head down, and was going to begin again, it was very provoking to find that the hedgehog had unrolled itself, and was in the act of crawling away: besides all this, there was generally a ridge or a furrow in the way wherever she wanted to send the hedgehog to, and, as the doubled-up soldiers were always getting up and walking off to other parts of the ground, Alice soon came to the conclusion it was a very difficult game indeed.'

In the first set of texts students are asked to engage in what seems to be a legitimate activity, representing a particular reading

sub-skill, that of scanning a text until a particular piece of information is found. However, in these cases students are asked to ascertain the truth value of certain statements in relation to the texts, whereas in real life such activities are much less ordered. If one is looking at a railway timetable the thoughts going through one's head are not likely to be 'The first train leaves at 6.30. Is this true or false?' but 'Given my likely set of circumstances tomorrow morning - late night, possible hangover, but appointments which I probably shouldn't get out of, which train might I reasonably expect to catch?' The question of to what extent the reading skills activities in the course book are distanced from those in real life is a serious one: although they may be distanced from, they are in some way presumably related to real life, for otherwise there would be no point in doing them.

Although no-one in real life would expect to read the first set of texts consecutively, the language in all of them and the activities associated with them can be described as transactional; one reads in order to do something or get something done, whether it is to select a bicycle or wire a plug correctly. I will now assert that although it is reasonable that this kind of language be represented in second language reading courses, it is in many over-represented.

In the Lewis Carroll text we are of course in a very different world, one of fantasy and imagination. There are also, to say the least, cultural reverberations. These relate not only to whether or not the rules of croquet might be known either to Anglo-Saxon or non Anglo-Saxon readers, but to the accessibility of English whimsy and irony. Transactional language can also present cultural problems, which might impede interpretation, since it must necessarily be set in particular contexts. The text above about children's bicycles

provides an example; one cannot assume that the concept of special bicycles for children is necessarily familiar to all second language readers. The point about text content, however, is not that it should be rooted strictly in the reader's here and now, whether the language of the texts be transactional or imaginative, but that the worlds of the texts should be both to some extent congruent with the reader's world and should serve to expand it. There has been much discussion in Britain about whether the denatured middle-class settings and characterisation in some well-known reading schemes are suitable for working-class children, both in terms of enhancing the child's self-image and in providing adequate role models. The answer is surely that such schemes are insufficient for all children, but that matters are not greatly improved if solely working-class settings and characterisation are imposed on working-class children. There is no point in ghettoising reading schemes. Precisely the same point can be made about reading material for ethnic minorities: one needs to start where one's pupils are, not to neglect roots, but also to move outwards into different imaginative worlds and different cultural contexts. The task of the materials writer and teacher is to provide linkage. This can only be done if there is a degree of commonality between the reader's world and the world of the text.

If it is true, as mentioned earlier, that texts are approached with built in assumptions relating to life experience, then pre-teaching becomes an important technique. In pre-teaching the teacher attempts to discover what, in general, pupils know about the text's subject matter and might also introduce new vocabulary and concepts essential for the text's comprehension. It should be emphasised, however, that this is a matter for fine professional judgement: it is not the

teacher's business to deny pupils an opportunity to grapple with a text; their task is to infer meaning for themselves from context, whilst at the same time bringing meaning to the reading event. The following section from an intermediate level text[4] could provide a case in point:-

PARENTS AND CHILDREN: An Asian Girl in Scotland

Balwinder Sandhu is at Glasgow University in Scotland. Her parents came to live in Scotland from India nineteen years ago.

1) "I have lived in this country for nineteen years. Like all Asians who grow up here I look at British life and Asian life, British customs and Asian customs. Who am I? Am I Indian or British? Am I neither? Am I sometimes both? A voice inside me says that I am Indian, but sometimes there are problems. My parents are more Indian than I am, but they know that Britain and India are different. I can talk to them, and they allow me to be free. They are not like a lot of Indian parents, who are afraid of British customs. Because I am free, I usually choose to follow Indian customs. I wish to live as an Indian in Britain, but I do not like some Indian customs.

2) "Indian parents behave differently towards boys and girls, and I do not like this. Boys are allowed to date, girls are not.

3) "Parents complain even if their daughters go out alone, or come home late, or say what they think. My parents are not like this, but many parents are. From the age of sixteen boys are usually free, but girls are almost never free. If an Asian girl goes out with a boy her parents are afraid. They are afraid that nobody will want to marry her. I think that this idea is stupid. Indian men want to date girls, but they do not want their sisters to date men. Most girls are somebody's sister. In the Asian family it is better to be a man.

"In the Indian family, children obey their parents, and especially their father. This is often true in British families also. But in an Indian family, if sons and daughters do not agree with their father, they will not say anything. They are afraid of their father. British children will talk to their parents if they do not agree. I can talk to my parents, but this is unusual. Indian parents think that British children do not respect their parents. In Dundee, where I live, some Asians think that I do not respect my parents."

The above could be preceded by a general discussion on parent-adolescent relationships, either in the mother tongue or in English at

the pupils' level, in which the teacher might hope that the pupils would provide specifics. This however pre-supposes an atmosphere of trust and confidence between teacher and pupils, probably built up over time. If this does not exist, then it might be better to go straight to the text.

However a text is approached, there is in text processing or decoding a psycholinguistic and semantic point to be made which relates to the question of the congruence, or lack of it, between the reader's world, schemata in the Kantian sense, general constructs built up from the reader's real and imaginative experience, and what is described or related in the text. If the latter cannot be accommodated by the former, then decoding will not happen. We cannot understand what is alien, even if the content is grammatically appropriate. The point is well made by Levin and Kaplan[5]:-

> In summary, we have suggested that the reader ..... continually assigns tentative interpretations to a text and checks these interpretations. As the material is grammatically or semantically constrained he is able to formulate correct hypotheses about what will come next. When the prediction is confirmed, the material covered by that prediction can be more easily processed and understood.

The checking is done against the reader's model of the world. Carroll[6] made much the same point in writing about language comprehension:-

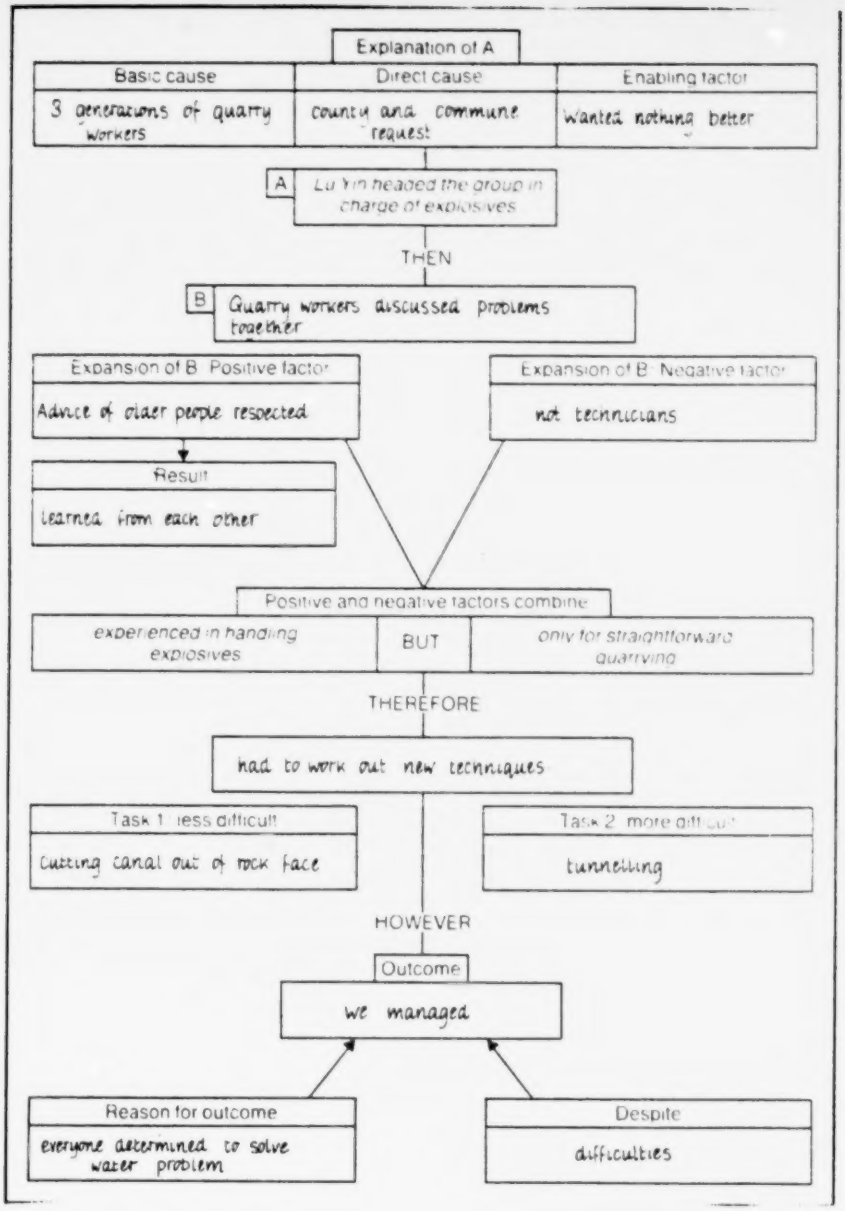
> Comprehension of a message is adequate or satisfactory to the extent that the language reader apprehends, at least provisionally, whatever linguistic information is present in the message and is able to relate that information to whatever context is available at a given time.

Once again, one does not come cold to a text. With this in view, it seems to us to be questionable for a course book writer or a teacher to merely impose prior meaning on a text, even transactional meaning, and even though the meaning imposed may be for the most part accurate.

Mastering transactional meaning is a legitimate way stage in reading courses, but not the sole end product. Christine Nuttall makes this point in relation to text diagrams, commonly used to enable students to interpret texts. Below is an extract from a text, and the relevant part of a text diagram[7].

The Red Flag Canal

> Explaining why he had headed the group in charge of explosions, Lu Yin replied: 'For three generations my family have been quarry workers. At county and commune level, they asked me to work on the canal. I wanted nothing better. We quarry workers put our heads together and discussed all the problems. We are not technicians, but the advice of the older people is respected and we learned from each other. We were used to handling explosives in the straightforward way you do in quarrying, and we had to work out new techniques for cutting a canal out of the rock face and especially for tunnelling. But we managed because everyone was determined to solve the water problem once and for all.'



Although text diagrams of this type cope adequately with pragmatic meaning, the dictionary meaning of the words cannot go beyond this. As Christine Nuttall[8] points out:-

> A text diagram made by the teacher imposes the teacher's view of the text. Obviously this is the justification for using diagrams, and it can be helpful. (It is also a feature of most teaching.) But having to put the text into diagram form forces decisions and can thus obscure valid differences over interpretation of ambiguous or otherwise doubtful parts.

It would, however, be a legitimate technique, relating to reading and note-taking, to leave some boxes in a text diagram blank, for completion by the reader.

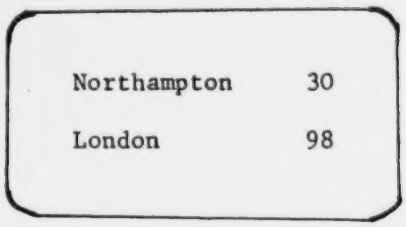
Nevertheless, what we are here talking about is the teacher's view of a text, interposed between the writer's presumed view and the reader. It should presumably be part of the aim of a reading skills course to move beyond pragmatics, and into interpretative meaning. It would surely miss the point, in relation to the text from 'Alice in Wonderland' quoted above to have exercises of the type:-

Alice played baseball with flamingos TRUE/FALSE

The discussion so far has centred on the style and content of reading texts, and on problems of interpretation, the tension between objective and personal meaning. It is now time to consider a little more closely the language of reading courses. Broadly speaking we can distinguish between two kinds of text, those which are contrived, simplified or graded, and those which are authentic. A contrived text, which may or may not be simplified from an authentic original, is written using strict linguistic controls, whether of structure, (some tenses permitted but not others), or of discourse (clause structure of a certain complexity and not beyond) or of lexis (e.g. not more than one 'new' word in ten, so that the reader might be expected to infer the meaning of the unknown from the known). It is written at or just above the level of the general language course or general course book, and is therefore suitable for intensive decoding by the reader. The passage above about relationships within an Asian family is an example of a contrived text.

Authentic texts are texts written by native writers for native readers and not originally designed for language learning purposes.

This definition may be regarded as sufficient in most cases, although there has been some quasi-philosophical discussion about whether an authentic text ceases to be authentic if it is used for non-authentic purposes. Such texts can be described as existing at various levels, but the ascription of a text to one level or another by a teacher is usually instinctive. The following are examples of very simple and complex authentic texts: the first is a motorway sign, the second culled from a reading course where the texts were taken from a 'prestige' British Sunday newspaper[9].



April 25th, 1982

The Clever Pigs of Animal Farm

by Conor Cruise O'Brien

I have had a good many occasions to observe democratic statesmen in contact with the different categories of murderers and torturers who hold power over most of the earth. I imagine the interior monologue of the average democratic statesman on making such a contact, to run more or less as follows:

"This fellow is a bit of a stinker, of course. To get where he is and stay there he must have had to do some pretty stinky things. His is a pretty stinky country, after all. Still, the point is that he did get where he is: the stink is no affair of mine. If they ever do get rid of him they'll only put in some other stinker, who may not suit our book as well as this fellow. In any case, the important thing is that he's in charge over there, just as we're in charge over here. So let's chat this fellow up and see what we can get out of him."

Even that monologue, morally unpretentious though it is, doesn't quite tell it all. There is a freemasonry among governments, which transcends ideology, regimes, and methods. Those who have made it in one set of circumstances have an

> instinctive respect for those who have made it in another set of circumstances, whatever the methods required by the other set of circumstances may be.
>
> General Galtieri, if fate had formed him in Finchley, would have been a democrat. Margaret Thatcher, born in Buenos Aires, would have become, well, authoritarian. Hard to credit, I know, but that's how it is.

In spite of the question of level mentioned above, many authentic texts will be well above the second language reader's general standard of attainment. A problem for the teacher of such readers can be to convince them that they do not have to understand everything in a text, to achieve complete comprehension, in order to get something from the exercise. This will be particularly true if it has been the teacher's practice to engage in elaborate explanations of every word, phrase image or metaphor in a text, to provide a commentary in other words. The following has been the practice in at least one Chinese university, and possibly others[10]:-

> 'Intensive reading ..... consists in taking students through a text on a word by word, phrase by phrase basis, explaining points of vocabulary, syntax, style and content along the way, rather like an explication de texte in the classical French tradition. The use of memorization and note learning on the part of students is fully explored and encouraged ..... This Confucian attention to detail was enhanced at Liberation in the early 50s by the influence of Russian educators. We believed that ancient Chinese methods had been adopted by European educators, and must therefore be firmly advocated and encouraged.'

Reading courses of this kind took up 20% of class contact hours for four year English majors in this university. They are not uncommon throughout the world, but three points can immediately be made: firstly that the French explication de texte was developed for native speakers of French already well versed in French culture and the French literary tradition, secondly that in this system it is the teacher who is doing the reading, not the students - they are mere passive recipients, not engaged in the process; thirdly, the hidden curriculum here could be

to persuade students that whereas their teacher is an intelligent, wise and sophisticated reader of English, they are not.

It is now time to consider the question of specific reading skills or sub-skills and how they are represented in exercise types in reading courses. One can again, broadly speaking, distinguish between two kinds of exercise, those which help students to achieve an intensive decoding or intensive reading of a text, and those which are intended for use, to show that a student has mastered content or an area of content by doing something with it, pushing it into a different mode or different skill by taking notes or extracting information, by discussion subsequent to reading, and so on. Psychologically, the second kind of exercise, where content is used, will relate to conservation in long-term memory. Intensive reading exercises are by and large but not exclusively designed for simplified or contrived texts, but exercises for use can be employed with both contrived and authentic texts.

On intensive reading, let us now consider the following multiple choice items, which follow the text quoted earlier on relationships in an Asian family:-

The most important idea in paragraph 1 is that Miss Sandhu;-

a) feels British but likes some Indian customs;

b) feels Indian but does not like everything Indian;

c) does not feel either British or Indian;

d) does not like British customs.

Miss Sandhu follows some Indian customs because;-

a) she wants to;

b) she cannot choose;

c) she is afraid of her parents;

d) her parents order her to follow Indian customs.

This kind of exercise would normally be done during the second reading of a text, after a class had read through the text once silently and quickly and been asked orally a few general comprehension questions to ensure that they had got the gist of the text. Multiple choice items of this type have the advantage of forcing a student to read a text closely in order to match the correct options with the relevant phrases in the text and discard the incorrect but hopefully plausible ones. In addition, the apparatus of some multiple choice items, like the first one above, connectives like 'and', 'but', 'also', 'neither ..... nor' with their relationship to logical thought, is in itself important for the developing reader to master. We are here of course involved with objective meaning, so the cavil mentioned earlier about the decoding of objective meaning being an important part but not the sole part of a reading course still stands. Nonetheless the superiority of multiple choice comprehension questions of this kind to the traditional type where a student could very often pluck the correct answer from the text without necessarily understanding it, since the form of the question merely keyed him in to the appropriate place, should be obvious. Here multiple choice items are being used for teaching and learning, not for testing subsequent to reading.

Let us next consider part of one of the sentences above:-

> " ..... to read a text closely in order to match the correct options with the relevant phrases in the text and discard the incorrect but hopefully plausible ones."

For the most part in English we decipher or decode text in a linear left to right fashion, but there are many occasions when in order to make sense before moving on we have to refer words back to other words. Thus in the example just quoted, the last word, the pro-form 'ones' refers back to 'options' which occurs fifteen words earlier. It is

likely that the beginning reader can only take in and process chunks of text of limited length: if anaphoric reference, to give it its technical term, occurs across chunks, then there is no guarantee that semantic connexions will be made. Reference back can be across clauses, sentences and sometimes paragraphs, and the reference can be to an earlier noun phrase or to more complex grammatical units. Here is an example:-

> 'Many parents treat their sons differently from their daughters. Personally I do not like this.'

Here 'this' refers back to the whole of the preceding sentence. Obviously mature readers manage anaphoric reference without thinking about it, but it is not certain that beginners in a second language do so. It seems therefore sensible to practise making these connexions formally.

Not all decoding is intensive. True/false exercises, as mentioned earlier, are generally aimed at the gist of a passage. Skim reading, or skimming, is a technique which precedes the completion of some exercises. Here the eye travels rapidly over the page in order that the general ideas or

main points be extracted or decoded. Scanning is somewhat different in that although the eye again travels rapidly over the page, the search is for a particular piece or particular pieces of information. This technique too needs to be made explicit. The text below[11] is intended to be read as a scanning exercise, but students left to their native devices as the writer points out might choose to read it intensively.

You want to go on an English course in summer. Here are some questions you ask yourself:

	YES	NO
Is the school open in July?		
Is the school open to boys and girls?		
Is the school far from London Airport?		
Will I be able to swim?		

Now look at the information about Padworth College, and tick the Yes or No column for each question.

Padworth College

Address Padworth, Near Reading, Berkshire RG7 4NP
Telephone Burghfield Common (073529) 2644/5
Telegrams Padworth College, Reading
Telex via 847423 COC-RG-G prefix "For Padworth College"
Principal Guy Wilson, MA(Cantab)
Padworth is a large 18th Century house in beautiful countryside one hour from London, and half hour from London Airport. Swimming, tennis, riding, sauna and large library available on premises. Audio and video teaching equipment.
Terms: 17 Jan–27 Mar, 18 Apr–26 Jun, 25 Sep–18 Dec. Young women only. Residential. General English Courses. Beginners to Cambridge Proficiency. "A" level Courses for overseas students with high standard of English. Courses include most Liberal Arts, Sciences and Business Studies. "O" level Courses in separate house. TEFL Courses for overseas teachers of English.
Most tutors live in College. Overseas students live with English speaking students preparing for "A" levels and University entrance.
△ Summer vacation courses are for foreign students of English, boys and girls beginning July 4, July 18, Aug 1, Aug 15. Course A age 15+ and Course B age 11–14. All levels. Two excursions weekly. Summer course – for 11–14 age group.
Academic year – Secretarial courses.

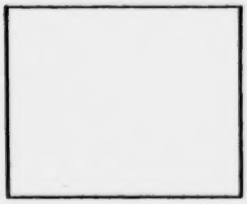
The expression or proof of successful decoding need not necessarily be verbal. Consider the following text and exercise[12].

Read the passage and complete the diagram. Use the symbols in the key.

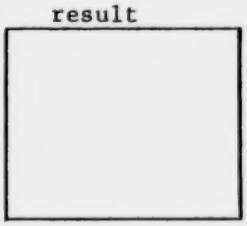
Bonnet's Experiment

The French biologist Bonnet placed a large flower swarming with ants on one end of a table. He then put a pile of sugar at the other end. The ants moved backwards and forwards between the two. Then Bonnet drew his finger across the trail. This caused great confusion. The ants began to move out sideways. Presently some of the foragers on one side of his finger trail recognised those on the other side. They then reconnected their broken trail. Bonnet concluded that ants follow a scent trail.

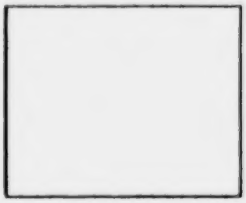
A. Before



B. Bonnet's finger trail and its result



C. After



Key:

X	the sugar
O	the flower
⟶	the ants' movement
.....	the finger trail

Note: each blank rectangle represents the table

What is being asked for here is a visual re-coding of the text. The act of reproducing the information in the text in diagram form forces a careful reading, where attention has to be paid in particular to language expressing spatial relationships. It would be suggested that this be done as a pair work exercise, with discussion between members of each pair. Subsequently, each pair shows its work to another pair: if there are differences or ambiguities to be resolved recourse must once again be had to the text.

We are now of course moving into our second category of exercise type, not simply decoding but also using. Apart from the question of learning and long-term memory mentioned earlier, we are also illustrating an important methodological principle, that of fully utilising content by re-cycling it. The initial re-cycling move has been from reading to visualisation. Subsequent moves could be to ask one's class to label the diagram using the verb forms, e.g. the sugar symbol in the first rectangle would be labelled 'put' and the finger trail in the second labelled 'drew', and so on. These labels can then be used as cues for oral or written re-constructions of the text, in further re-cycling.

Other 'use' exercises might involve moves from reading to writing or reading to discussion: one is therefore very much in the study skills or reading for academic purposes area. Writing can include anything from extracting information and reproducing it in tabular form to writing notes or summarising. Again, one is involved in first-stage re-cycling with the option of stopping or proceeding further. Consider the following[13]:-

Part 2

Types of classifications

Activity 1 There are two main ways in which classifications can be organized. Each of the following passages shows a different way of organizing a classification. Read the first passage in order to complete the diagrams after it, then answer question 1.

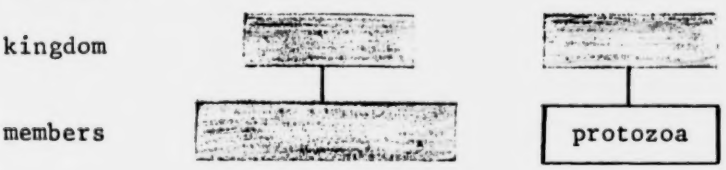
PROBLEMS OF CLASSIFYING MICRO-ORGANISMS

Micro-organisms were once regarded as being members of the plant kingdom, apart from protozoa which were classed as animals. It became obvious that this arbitrary classification resulted in confusions, even absurdities. A virus infecting an animal cannot, by any criterion, be termed a plant. There became almost as many systems of classification as there were microbiologists. In order to

clarify the nature of micro-organisms, we may distinguish between those, like fungi and some algae, which have a cell structure similar to higher organisms and those, like the bacteria and the blue-green algae, which have a comparatively simple cell structure. We will refer to the former as 'higher protists' and to the latter as 'lower protists'. Both these groups are placed in the kingdom Protista. The viruses and the recently described subviral agents cannot at present be adequately classified, so we shall place them in a group of their own.
From: Gerald Wasky Teach Yourself Microbiology (Hodder and Stoughton)

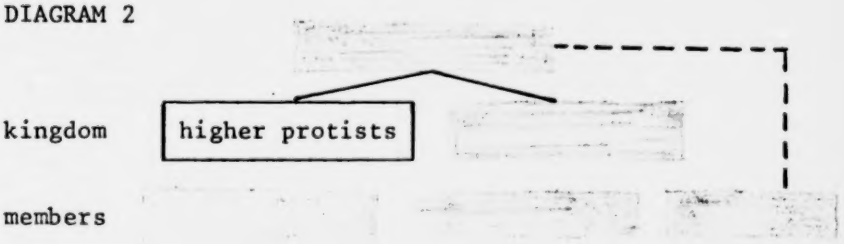
Complete diagram 1 to show the traditional classification of micro-organisms.

DIAGRAM 1



Now complete diagram 2 to show the system of classification used by the writer.

DIAGRAM 2



1 Why was the traditional classification inadequate?

The diagram could be used for a re-writing of the text, at a simpler level. Next, consider the following exercises[14]:-

A Writing an agenda

After reading the text complete the following, as if you were drawing up an agenda for the Potsdam meeting.

THE FUTURE OF GERMANY

FUNDAMENTAL ISSUES
1 The aim of occupation
2 .....

POINTS SO FAR AGREED
1 .....
2 .....

POINTS STILL TO BE AGREED
1 .....
2 .....
3 .....
4 .....
5 Future of the German merchant navy

B Working in mixed groups, find answers to and discuss the following points, in relation to the position in Britain or any other country known to you.

1 whether or not women have political equality, and if so, when they gained it?

2 whether or not the principle of equal pay for equal work is accepted.

3 whether or not, in fact as opposed to principle, some women are underpaid.

4 whether some jobs or professions are still thought of as mainly for men.

5 whether or not women find it harder than men to get to the top of certain professions (e.g. in Britain there are more women teachers than men teachers, but more men Head Teachers than women Head Teachers.) If so, why?

6 whether or not religious reasons have been advanced to prevent women's advancement. If so, what reasons, and what do you think of them?

7 whether or not social reasons have been similarly advanced (e.g. 'Women's place is in the home'. 'Men can't look after children') What do you think of these reasons?

Each group should try to arrive at an agreed position on these points, and present its findings to the other groups.

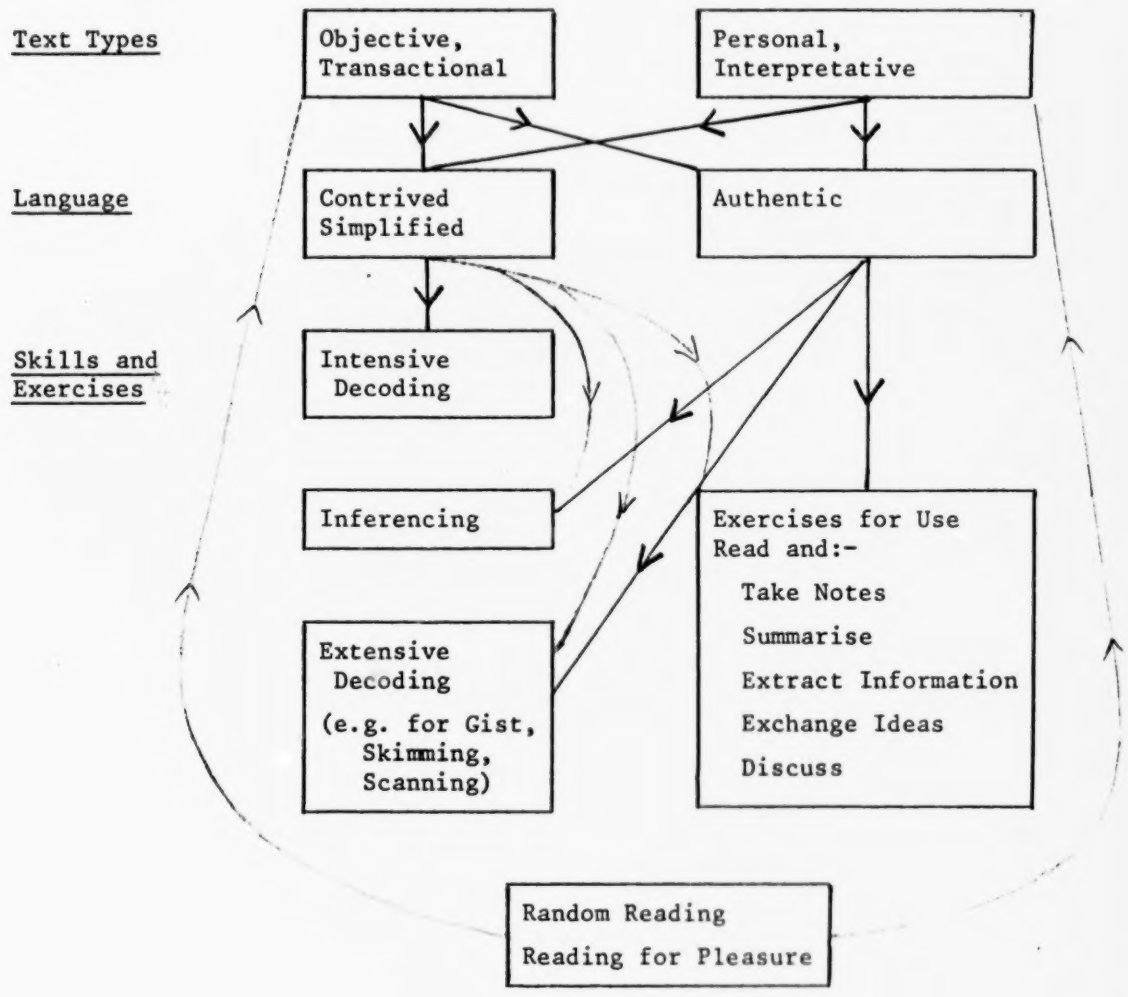
The exercise 'Writing an agenda' follows a text on the Potsdam conference at the end of the Second World War in 1945. We have here an obvious essay in guided note-taking, where students are supposed to be able to infer from the skeletal entries given what the full set would look like, by, of course, going back to the text. In the other exercise, the assumption is that discussion in a language class does not just happen, but has to be carefully structured and prepared for. Here, a

difficult text on the emancipation of women in Britain, was meant to be skim-read for gist: the global content is then related to personal knowledge and experience. The text is in this case a prop for subsequent work. The point about discussion in pairs prior to open discussion is that it provides a rehearsal in less threatening circumstances: students who might normally be silent in public are less likely to be so if they can practise what they are going to say in private first.

Another way to approach discussion subsequent to reading can be through the technique known as jigsaw reading[15], where readers might have different parts of a text, or different but related texts. Through information gap exercises, they each have to exchange what they know, so that everyone might arrive at the full picture. There are analogues here with seminar discussion in real life, where students might have read about different aspects of a topic.

We are now in a position to provide a model for a reading course, as below;-

Model for a Reading Course



The first three layers of this model, text types, language and skills and exercises have been the subject matter of this paper so far, but the last, random reading and reading for pleasure needs a little further explanation. It was suggested earlier that the moves which needed to be made in order to become a mature reader, to be able to dispense with the course book, were problematic. One possible solution might be to encourage readers to indulge in 'mature' reading from the beginning, or very nearly from the beginning. This is to say that a proportion of

reading time should be set aside for reading at personal choice, reading on which no exercises are set and where the fulfilling of no task is demanded. We are of course presupposing the provision of classroom libraries or reading resource centres where as wide a variety as possible of print materials is available - newspapers and magazines, even magazines written for language learners, comic books, fiction whether original or simplified, popular science writing and so on. It is not suggested, obviously, that this replace the structured course, but that it accompany it.

One final point remains. There is, it seems to us, an implicit behaviourist ideology underlying much reading skills work. The notion is that one can divide up 'reading' into various component parts and practise each part separately with appropriate exercise types in an ordered fashion. This will thus add up to 'reading' - the whole will not be more than the sum of the parts, no mysterious alchemy transmuting base operations is operating. We do not hold this idea to be necessarily true, but since, as has been already mentioned, many readers particularly in a second language do not learn to read fluently merely through reading, whether the reading be random or imposed, without attention being paid to specific skills, we do not necessarily hold it to be false either. Given the present state of the art, it seems reasonable to be sensibly eclectic in approaching the business of teaching reading. Thus the question which heads this paper 'Is reading a global skill or a set of skills?' cannot be adequately answered. The two are of course not mutually exclusive alternatives.

1. Catherine Wallace 'Learning to Read in a Multicultural Society' Pergamon 1986 p.126

2. from Evelyn Davies and Norman Whitney 'Strategies for Reading' Heinemann 1981

3. from Lewis Carroll 'Alice's Adventures in Wonderland' children's edition MacMillan 1927

4. from Brian Harrison 'The Danger Light' Newbury House 1978

5. H Levin and E L Kaplan 'Grammatical Structure and Reading' in H Levin and J P Williams (eds.) 'Basic Studies on Reading' Basic Books, New York 1970

6. J B Carroll 'Defining Language Comprehension : Some Speculations' in J B Carroll and R O Freedle (eds.) 'Language Comprehension and the Acquisition of Knowledge' John Wiley and Sons 1972

7, 8 Christine Nuttall 'Teaching Reading Skills in a Foreign Language' Heinemann Educational Books 1982

9. Conor Cruise O'Brien in 'The Observer' 1982 quoted in Brian Harrison 'Britain Observed' European Schoolbooks 1984

10. S Q Fang 'The EFL Teaching and Learning Process in a Chinese Teacher Education University' unpublished M.Ed dissertation Leicester University 1986

11. from Eddie Williams 'Reading in the Language Classroom' MacMillan 1984

12. P MacEldowney 'English Language v. Communication' in 'Teaching in the Multi-Cultural School' ed. J Lynch Ward Lock 1981

13. from 'Reading and Thinking in English' Vol. 3 'Discovering Discourse' Teachers' edition The British Council, Oxford 1979

14. from Brian Harrison op. cit 1984

15. v. e.g. Marion Geddes and Gill Sturtridge Reading Links Heinemann 1982

16. from Brian Harrison op. cit 1978 adapted from Oscar Lewis 'The Children of Sanchez' Random House Inc. and Martin Secker and Warburg 1961

17. P MacEldowney unpublished teaching material Manchester University